

Living Treasures

of Clatsop County



Living Treasures *of Clatsop County*

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Clatsop County is an area of great diversity, bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean, on the north by the Columbia River estuary and encompassing the forests of the coastal mountains. Sandy ocean beaches, rocky points, sand dunes, river mouth, estuary islands, diked tideland, mud flats, mountains and their river valleys all are contained within the county borders.

Historical events are equally dramatic: the settlement of the Chinook Indians, early visits by Captain Robert Gray and Lewis and Clark, establishment of the first American settlement west of the Rocky Mountains, construction of jetties to confine and fortification to protect the river, great fisheries and logging activities including those resulting from World War II and the maritime industry.

This great variety of geography and history has resulted in an exceptional diversity of people and experience among the county's relatively small population. Descendants of early settlers remain here as well as those who have been attracted by the area's beauty and opportunity.

The goal of this project was to identify ten people who have the ability and are willing to talk to others about themselves, their families, and their experiences.

These people were chosen with the help of the Clatsop County Historical Society and recommendations from many others. Among the characteristics they share, besides an optimism that comes from a successful life, is a self confidence that is a result of their own experiences and perhaps from their parents and grandparents who often had to depend on internal strength to survive as pioneers in a land different from that to which they were accustomed.

The participants in this program are willing to talk to groups about their experiences. They may be contacted through the Sea Grant/Extension office at 503-325-8027 or the Clatsop Historical Society at 325-2203. They should be compensated for their time.

Clarence 'Snooky' Barendse

Gillnet fisherman, logger, duck decoy collector, trap shooter, land developer, former resident of the Brownsmead-Knappa area.

Clarence Barendse has the confidence in himself and knowledge of the natural resources of Clatsop County that have allowed self-employment during his years near Brownsmead and Knappa. His Dutch father came to Brownsmead in 1915 after time spent in Washington state, Clifton, and Tenasillahe Island. The Ericksons of his mother's side of the family were Finnish and Swedish. They came to the Brownsmead area in 1885 to gillnet salmon on the Columbia River.

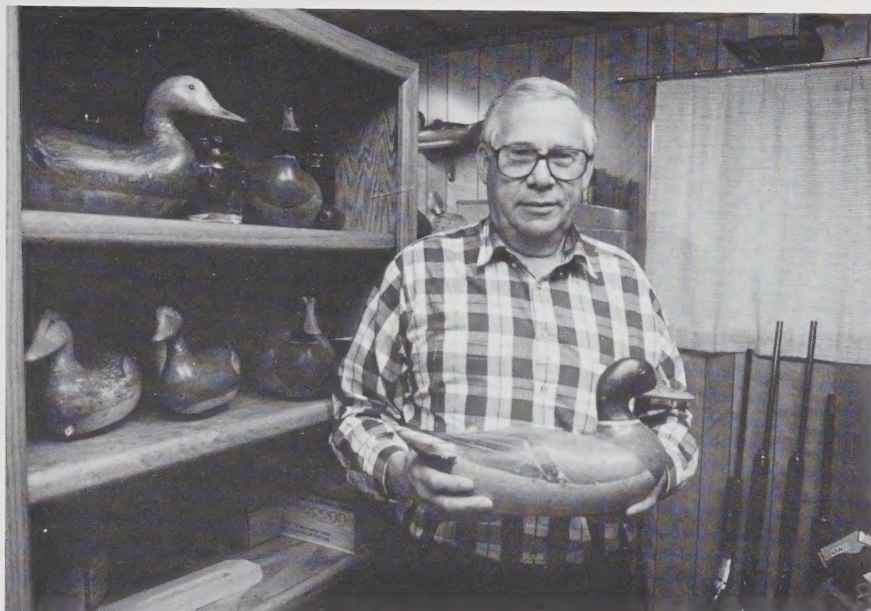
The Barendse family came to Brownsmead to farm. They were attracted by the flat rich bottomland that had been diked by developers, Brown and Jones, who had seen the land from the train. The railroad, which was built along the river in 1898, was an important factor in the development of the area.

The first Barendse home was a tent with board floors and walls. Land clearing was slow with the early day equipment, although all of Brownsmead

was not forests. The first farm products were peas, corn, milk, and cream. The trucks used to bring farm products to the Astoria market became an area service that carried Brownsmead produce to Astoria and returned city goods to the farms. The feed store, where Pier 11 is today, was an Astoria destination of the truck line.

Clarence remembers the sounds of the old engines of the gillnet boats that allowed him to identify each as he listened from his bed in the house near the slough. Many local fishermen fished the Brownsport drift near the now almost forgotten town of that name on the islands. He began fishing as a crew member before World War II. While serving in the war in Europe he was captured by the Germans. The thought of returning home from a prisoner of war camp to fish the Columbia sustained him during those bad times.

After returning to Clatsop County, Clarence began his fishing and logging career. A gillnet boat built by the Blix family of Puget Island served him well when fishing. His drift was near the old town of Brownsport and the Cabith Sands seining grounds. Logging began to fill in times when fishing was poor.



The family company, The Fertile Valley Logging Company, bought land and logged it, usually doing everything, including cutting, bucking, and hauling. A few people were hired as needed for some of the larger projects. The combination of fishing and logging sustained the family well.

Like many young people who lived near the Columbia, Clarence also trapped muskrat and mink in his early years. Hunting was both a sport and, at times, part of subsistence. Duck hunting inspired trap shooting and a hand in the organization of the Knappa Gun Club, that continues today. Hunting also developed his interest in the decoys made by area carvers.

In recent years, the search for the products of Bergman, Pice, Bay, and others has taken the place of duck hunting. His collection of hundreds of decoys has led to a knowledge of not only the carvers but of the changes they made in their style during their lives.

Clarence has an intense interest in the history of the area and has sought out information on early day logging, the early post offices in Brownsmead including Albert, Blind Slough and Brodie, and the settlements on the Islands.

Edna Ellen Bell

*Occupational therapist, world traveler,
weaver, teacher, resident of Gearhart*

Memories of the people who have lived in Gearhart and had a part in making it as it is today are important to Edna Ellen Bell. The Kinneys of her mother's side of the family, especially Mary Strong Kinney, had a great influence on her and on the area.

Her mother, Charlotte May Bennett, became a foster daughter of the Kinney family when she was twelve. Mr. Kinney had a summer house built in Gearhart. He died at a relatively early age and Mary Strong Kinney managed the family business, which included a lumber mill in Astoria. Mrs. Kinney later served in the Oregon Legislature and on the Board of Oregon Agricultural College. While summers were spent in Gearhart, the family home was up the hill from the mill in Astoria.

Marshall Kinney, Mary Strong Kinney's brother-in-law, was an early developer of Gearhart. He bought the land claim from Phillip Gearhart, the second owner. Following the lead of Ben Holiday, who developed Seaside, Marshall built many of the early

developments in Gearhart. Among those were the Chautauqua House, the first golf course, the first hotel and attached bowling alley.

Edna Ellen's parents were married in Gearhart, the first recorded wedding there. Her father, Chriss Bell, was related to the Espy family in Washington and was an attorney in Portland. He came to Gearhart to spend weekends with the family during the summer on the "daddys" train. The train united many Portland and Astoria fathers with their families living in the summer homes on the beach.

Edna Ellen's memories of childhood in Gearhart include playing in the abandoned Chautauqua house that had once featured John Phillip Sousa and William Jennings Bryan, walking the old ridge trail, and wandering through the sheep grazed golf course. The beach, which was closer to the house than now, was an important place for picnics and supplied clams and crabs for the family dinners. The crab pools that disappeared with the changes to the beach were often warm enough to swim in. The Gearhart natatorium, better than the one in Seaside, was a center of activity and included swimming, diving, and children's contests. Trips to Seaside on the train, on foot, or by rowboat across the river,

often included a visit to the Pendleton woolen store for yarns, the skating rink, and the little store (The 19th hole) that served ice cream sodas.

There were prejudices in Gearhart during WWI. The children were warned to avoid the home of a German family. However, Bill Badger, a black man who worked as a handyman, eventually owned a chicken dinner restaurant and was elected to the city council.

The land itself has changed over the years. The sand from the beach used to almost bury some houses during the winter and they would have to be dug out before they could be used during the summer. The old beach road, first planked and later paved, has disappeared under the sand. There were many more trees than now and they were in different places. The golf course has changed and the fences with stiles have disappeared.



After an education as an occupational therapist and employment in various places within the United States including a position with the Army hospital in Spokane, she set up a training course for therapists at the College of Puget Sound in Tacoma. She served in Washington, D.C. during the Eisenhower administration and later worked in Alaska. Edna Ellen returned to Gearhart as a permanent resident in 1958. She made use of the skills she had used in her work to open a lapidary shop in Seaside for a few years and taught weaving and other arts and crafts through a number of local institutions. She continues to enjoy the rural life at Gearhart.

Palmer Henningsen

*Farmer, truck driver, 4-H leader,
Youngs River Valley resident*

Palmer Henningsen has seen many changes in the Youngs River Valley farms during the past 60 years. His Danish father, Jens Peter Henningsen, came to this country to escape European militarism. Relatives who preceded him attracted him to Clatsop County. After working as a fisherman and later as a milker on a dairy farm, he saved enough money to bring other family members, including his parents. Palmer's grandfather became the area's unofficial veterinarian, using folk remedies and skills he acquired through experience.

The family worked rented land until they could purchase the land making up the present Henningsen Farm. Milk was one of the farm products that had ready sale. It was rowed to town and off-loaded at Tidepoint, then ladled to customers' containers from cans carried in a horse-drawn wagon. When transportation improved, the Henningsens were among the first to sell milk in glass bottles.

Palmer's Norwegian mother had been married to Hauke who owned the Hauke's Grocery Store, and



married Peter Henningsen after her first husband died. The three Henningsen children were added to the seven from her first marriage. She continued to manage the store, which often sold produce from the farm. Credit extended to store customers, much never collected, made the operation less than lucrative.

As land was cleared for farming, one of the first crops was potatoes. Pickers who assisted harvesting the plowed up crop were given one sack of potatoes for each ten they picked. Another fall crop was rutabagas, which were often fed to the milk cows. Care had to be taken that the feed did not taint the

milk. Customer milk bills were often paid by trading garden products, which were then sold in the store.

Palmer's schooling, first at Mountain View and later at Astoria High, was often interrupted for needed work on the farm. Summers brought custom mowing and other work for neighboring farms that provided cash. A bentgrass seed industry that flourished for a time brought extra money to area farmers. Some became relatively well off through purchase of logged land for fifty cents an acre with promises from the county to redeem it when trees grew for one and one-half dollar an acre. When the county couldn't meet its obligation, timber companies purchased it for up to fifteen dollars.

Other crops included cabbage for sauerkraut and peas. With transportation charges and increasing labor costs, these crops, like the dairies that flourished for a time, disappeared. As profit margins for milk became less, more cattle were required to keep a viable operation. Most farms turned to beef production often by breeding dairy cattle to a beef bull.

With the end of dairying, Palmer began to supplement farm income by logging. A job opportunity, driving a milk tanker, got him a chauffeur's license

and into the union. The Teamsters work continued until his recent retirement.

The Henningsen family, Palmer, his wife who he met in grade school, and their three daughters were always community minded. The school was an early day community center where pie auctions raised money. Later, the Grange became important. The conflict between the Norwegian Lutheran religion of Palmer's father and the Grange disappeared. The Henningsen farm became a center of youth activities when the red barn became a place for square dances and sport games. Other area young people, some now adults, also benefited from Palmers' twenty-five years as a 4-H leader of beef and dairy clubs, an activity that he still continues.

Palmer has seen many changes in the Youngs River Valley. The loss of small farms because of competition and government regulation concerns him. A recent threat to dike land could take some of the area's richest land out of production. Increasing pressure for homesites is making land too valuable to farm. While his commitment to family will ensure continued existence of the farm while he owns it, his children will have to make decisions about the land's future.

Eldon Korpela

*Columbia River and Alaskan gillnetter,
educator, biologist, Astoria resident*

Eldon Korpela is a fisherman, has studied fisheries, biology, and has taught young people how to raise fish. His entire life has centered on the salmon fisheries. He continues to take an active part in fishery matters and to fish.

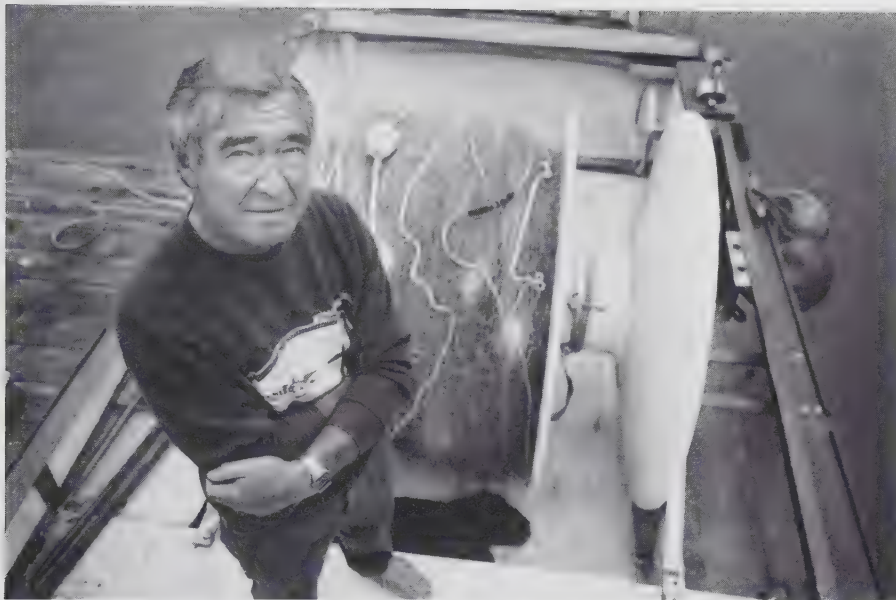
Eldon is a third generation Columbia River gillnetter. His grandfather, Matt, came to Astoria in 1895 to fish the Columbia River. Matt was a tough fisherman who began fishing in sailing gillnetters. One of his techniques was to drift his gillnet over the bar through the breakers and retrieve it outside in the ocean. He lost a crewman when his boat was run down by a ship. He and others, mostly Finnish fishermen, founded the Union Fish Cannery after strikes and low prices during the 1890's.

Emil, Eldon's father and one of four brothers, all of whom were fishermen, gillnetted the Columbia for 30 years, but also fished a troller in the ocean for 25 years. His trips often took him far from Astoria to

other ports where he landed his catch. Trips sometimes lasted six or eight weeks during the summer.

Eldon began gillnetting with his father when he was seven years old. The boat, unlike modern ones, had no steering mechanism in the bow, so Eldon steered for a share of one cent per fish. When he was in the eighth grade, he fished as a boat puller for 10 percent of the gross. By the time he was a junior in high school, he was receiving the full share of a regular crewman.

In 1945, Eldon joined the U.S. Navy. When he returned, he went to college, eventually completing a masters degree in fisheries, biology, and teaching. During his school years, he continued to fish commercially. After a bad experience as a crew member on a boat that exploded and blew him and the owner into the water, his father helped him build his own boat for the Columbia River in 1948. He also began, in 1952, to fish Bristol Bay and later Cook Inlet, Alaska, during the summers. The canneries provided boats and gear there, but expected fishermen to "toe the line." As the fishermen gradually shifted to ownership of their own boats, they demanded and received more freedom. Alaska has been very profitable for many Astoria area fisher-



men and has carried them through bad times on the Columbia River. The money they brought back to Oregon has helped to sustain the area economy.

Eldon has also worked as a research biologist along the Oregon coast and in the ocean. He taught for many years, recently retiring from the Astoria

School System. While teaching, he developed an advanced biology class with a curriculum that included raising salmon and learning about the area fisheries. With the assistance of Astoria fishermen, the students built and operated a hatchery that raised and released 50,000 fall Chinook smolts a year. The success of the program was a stimulus to a county salmon enhancement program that continues to expand in Youngs Bay.

Since retiring from school teaching, Eldon has been very busy with a number of fishery matters. He has been a member of the board of the Statewide Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program, Clatsop

Economic Development Council Salmon Committee, Salmon for All, and others. He is valued for the practical outlook his experience has given him.

Eino Koskela

Machinist, musician, photographer, woodworker, cannery superintendent, Astoria resident

Keeping occupied mentally has brought knowledge of many different and interesting things to Eino Koskela. It has especially benefited his career as a supervisor and developer of equipment for fish processing, an interest continued by his sons.

Kalle and Aina Koskela, Eino's parents, came to this country from Finland about the turn of the century. They came for the greater opportunity here and met in the United States. Kalle worked as a logger in Minnesota and Washington and later fished. Saw filing became a second occupation that he continued the rest of his life.

Eino was born and grew up in Uniontown. At that time, it was a Finnish town with the Chinese town between it and Astoria on the upriver side. Much of the area was built over the water on pilings, even the streets and streetcar tracks.

The fire of 1922 that burned downtown Astoria was not as strong a memory as the more local fires



that burned the socialist hall and Hannula Boarding house in Uniontown. Other memories of that time include catching crawfish in the river at night during low tide, helping translate for an uncle who sold potatoes door to door, the Finnish-speaking Chinese

who sold vegetables to the people in Uniontown, and attending Taylor and Gray Grade Schools. High school meant a long walk to the top of the steep hill on 16th Street where the community college is today.

Music was an interest dating from a violin received for Christmas when he was 7 years old, an interest that increased through the years of school. Playing in a small school orchestra and at Finnish brotherhood dances led to the formation of a Gray School dance group. Later in high school, much more time was spent practicing with the trumpet. Since music was outside the school curriculum, practice involved walking back after school for practice. A high school dance group led to city band and finally playing at local dances. An invitation to play at Club 13 turned into a 6 1/2 year stint. Club 13 was a very active place during World War II when as many as 20,000 Navy people resided in the Astoria area.

Working at the Union Fishery Cooperative resulted from fishing with his father and then alone for one year. While fishing at night conflicted with his music jobs, the work at the cannery fit his schedule better. The work was needed during Depression times, and Eino soon found his way into

maintenance, where he learned a little about all the cannery operations. Eventually he became a supervisor and not only maintained equipment but helped design operations and even new equipment, a career that his sons who worked with him continue with their own companies.

The cannery work changed over the years from canning primarily salmon to include other species such as tuna, shrimp, and bottomfish. The Chinese contract workers were replaced by union workers. During the 1960s the Astoria bridge was built almost over the roof of the union cannery.

Other interests continue and have been given even more time after retirement. These include collecting mushrooms, woodworking, gardening, and many different aspects of photography. In recent years, travel and the study of Spanish have been added. The Koskelas continue to live today in west Astoria.

Conrad W. Petersen

*Electrician, farmer, jetty worker, musician, millworker,
Warrenton-Hammond resident*

Conrad Petersen has been very active in a wide variety of occupations typical of Clatsop County. His German parents came to the United States in the late 1800's to escape militarism and seek greater opportunity than was available in the old country. His father gillnetted salmon, took claims to land in Washington state, and came to Hammond to work with the lifesaving service. He helped the ship crew of the Peter Iredale to safety when it wrecked in 1906. He later bought and ran a dairy farm in the Lewis and Clark area.

Mr. Petersen grew up on his father's dairy farm. He and his siblings helped sell milk and other farm products to Astoria. Some area farmers rowed their produce across Youngs Bay to town. When the U.S. Army's Spruce Division camped on the farm on their way to Clatsop forests they sold the soldiers milk. Their camp near the present Crown Camp existed until the end of WWI. The family was careful to lead an exemplary life during that time because of the

prejudice toward those of German ancestry. Conrad's work on the farm near the Lewis and Clark River led to adventures as a bridge tender and with the barge and boat traffic that was frequent at that time.

The sound of the first airplanes often emptied the Chadwell Grade School of students and the landing of a disabled plane in a local pasture kindled a lifelong interest in airplanes. Conrad often rode with the barnstorming pilots and remembers especially a tour around the area in a plane once used in the Byrd Antarctic explorations in the early 30's.

Adult responsibilities on the farm and a change from a one-room country school with one teacher for eight grades to the Astoria High School was not easy. A rebellious spirit often brought difficulties there.

Prohibition, bootleggers, and country dances were a part of Conrad Petersen's early life. Later, he often played saxophone with a band at celebrations and Saturday night dances.

After working as a gillnetter, as a seiner, as a logger, and as a musician, he got a job with the company rebuilding the Columbia River jetties. The four-year stint included starting as a brakeman placing cleats

behind the crane as it unloaded and placed rocks. The rebuilding of the old sea-level jetty included building railroad rails for rail cars hauling rock. Besides solving all the problems of unloading and placing the millions of tons of rocks, there were ocean storms, waves, and drifting dunes to deal with.



With the end of the jetty construction, Conrad began work at the Youngs Bay Lumber Mill, where he became a millwright and learned about electricity. The mill was one of the first all-electric operations with electric motors running equipment instead of steam. Warrenton was a mill town then with four lumber mills operating at one time. The mills gradually shut down when timber harvest shifted to other areas.

With the decline of the mills, the skills Conrad had gained as an electrician brought employment with Larsen Electric. Floyd Larsen was one of the first electricians in the area, a pioneer in the electric business. A very early generating plant at the flour mill made Astoria one of the first cities in Oregon to have electrical streetlights.

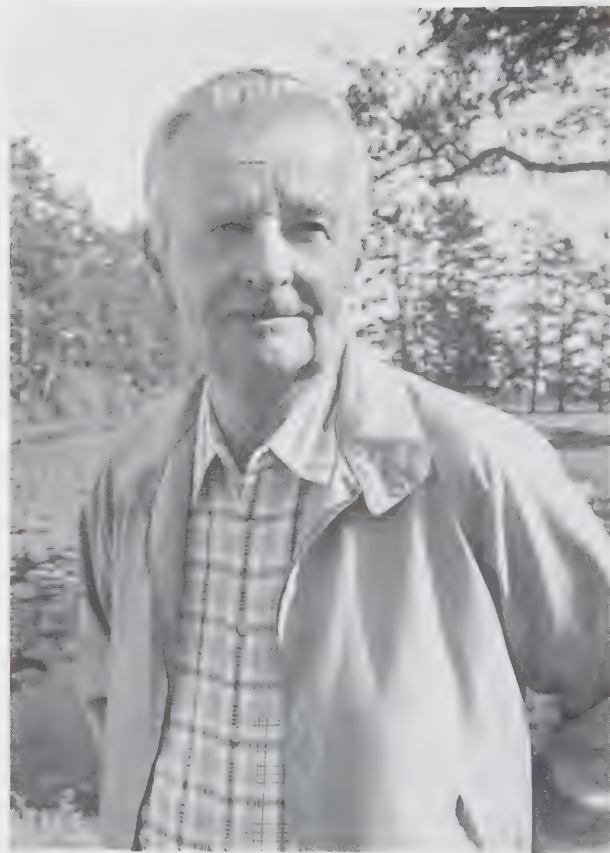
Conrad Petersen and his wife Carolyn reside in Hammond in a house near the one his father built in the early 1900's. He continues to operate the Warrenton Electric Store.

Paul See

*Geologist, teacher, gardener, farmer,
resident of Clatsop Plains*

Paul See's early memories are of the drifting sand dunes, ocean beach, shipwrecks, and the people of Clatsop Plains. His maternal grandfather, Josiah West, arrived in Oregon in 1868 and came to Clatsop County the following year. He eventually owned several donation land claims, about 2000 acres, that ran from Cullaby Lake to the ocean and from the Pacific Grange on the north to Bud's Drive-In on the south. His grandmother was of the Harrison family who settled on North Plains west of Beaverton. Paul's father came from Canada after serving in the Canadian Army and being wounded during World War I. He met Paul's mother when he worked on his grandfather's farm.

During the early years on Clatsop Plains, most of the area between Highway 101 and the ocean was drifting sand. Indian middens were sometimes exposed on the windward side of dunes and Paul often found artifacts there, one time even a complete skeleton with a stone arrowhead stuck in a rib.



The inland side of the highway was much more extensively covered with cranberry bogs than today. The bogs were first developed by Josiah West. Many unique machines were developed to pick and separate berries before the modern method using flooded bogs and floating berries was adopted. Some of those west of Cullaby and on the northern Clatsop Plains have gone back to nature.

The hard times of depression on the Clatsop Plains brought fields of potatoes and rutabagas, many of which were fed to cattle. Crabs and clams from the beach, so abundant they could be dug by hand, supplemented other food sources. The wreck of the Mauna Ala, a ship bringing Christmas goodies to Hawaii, supplied residents with flour and turkeys at a time when such things were otherwise scarce.

Many of the people who lived on Clatsop Plains in those days have relatives in the area today. Besides the teachers at the old Delmoor school, Paul remembers the Anderson, Dellinger, Dawson, and Wilkinson families, many of whom had dairy farms or grew cranberries. One of the most intriguing people was Bill Badger, a black man who drove children to school. He also worked as a handyman around the area and he later owned a chicken dinner

restaurant at the intersection of Highway 101 and Gearhart Road. He was an important part of the community and suffered no apparent discrimination.

Another interesting character lived among the almost inaccessible dunes west of Neahcoxie Lake. He made moonshine in a dune covered dugout and served his customers, who rowed across the lake to reach his place of business.

Shelling of Fort Stevens by a Japanese submarine occurred during Paul's high school years in Seaside. College was delayed by wartime service, but education as a geologist eventually led to time spent in the Southwestern part of the United States. Upon return to the area in 1963, he began his career in education, first at Warrenton High School and later at Clatsop Community College, from which he retired as a dean. During that time, he continued work his father had begun as a well driller and began a geological consulting business. As a result of greater emphasis on land use planning the business has continued to grow. Recent understanding of the periodic earthquakes of the Northwest coast has led to even more involvement in statewide planning and development issues.

George Shields

City Counselor, historian, resident of Tolovana Park

George Shields remembers the changes in the ocean beaches, buildings, and people of Tolovana Park—Cannon Beach during the past 50 years. His ties to the area go back to the donation land claim of the Warrens, who are relatives by marriage. The Warrens built the old Warren Hotel where the Tolovana Inn now sits. Another relative on his grandmother's side, named Sayre, was an early minister in the Clatsop Plains Presbyterian Church. His grandmother was an Astoria teacher and his great grandfather designed and helped build the Astoria Water Works.

Due to the ties to the area, his father and mother moved to Tolovana Park in 1934 from Longview, WA, for health reasons. The hard times made jobs hard to find, and his mother became the Tolovana postmistress and worked in the store they later owned. His father began a firewood and delivery business that eventually became a fuel oil service. Young George's connections to the store, post office, and wood deliveries brought a wide acquaintance with the area and its people.

The trips to and from Cannon Beach school each day further familiarized him with the early 1940s businesses in Cannon Beach. Among them were the Ordway Service Station that many thought of as the "school for boys" because so many worked there. Others were the Natatorium, Lamphere Grocery, Cannon Beach Mercantile, Sunset and Bills Tavern, Two Sisters Cafe, a clam cannery, bakery, drugstore, and post office. The skating rink was a form of summer entertainment. A duck pin bowling alley was a first place of employment for many local youngsters. The hermit of Falcon Cove, who made cigars in a factory built from beach lumber, intrigued the young people. Cannon Beach was much different then, with more wetland. Main street Cannon Beach flooded most years and people hunted ducks east of downtown. Much of that area has since been filled.

During WWII, a locally organized beach patrol was replaced by the U.S. Army, and later the Coast Guard. Emplacements were dug near the ocean, and patrols that at first walked the beach, later were horseback. Women monitored all aircraft from small glassed-in, beach front buildings. Families were prepared to load supplies into their automobiles for a retreat into the forests to the east if an invasion came.

When a Japanese submarine shelled Fort Stevens, the Shields family got everything ready, including rifles, but the orders to evacuate the town never came.

Logging was an important industry during the early part of this century. Plank roads, replaced later by rock, led from the beach to the forest.

George Van Vleet logged to the east of Cannon Beach, Arch Cape and Tolovana Park. He was reputed to be a man quick to anger and often sent his employees down the road when he was displeased. George found him to be understanding of a student summer worker, and he advanced from choker setter to log scaler and, later, bull buck. He was even allowed to load a few trucks after Mr. Van Vleet caught him practicing with the loading donkey one night after work.



Changes in relationships between full-time residents of the beach and "summer" people occurred as travel became easier. Because transportation was so difficult, early day visitors stayed all summer and became part of the community. They understood local customs, such as establishing ownership of a driftwood log by marking it with initials. With the construction of Highway 26 and better cars, more

weekenders came and old ways began to change. Cottages were converted to homes and motels were built for short visits. There was less interaction between visitors and residents.

George Shields still lives in the house his parents lived in, in Tolovana Park. His historical knowledge gives him an optimistic view of continued development of the area for the benefit and enjoyment of everyone.

Myrtle Johnston Slanger

*Teacher, Nehalem Valley resident, farmer,
4-H leader, local historian*

Myrtle Slanger and her family have taken an active part in the development of the farming, logging, and community affairs of the Nehalem Valley. Her grandfather William Johnston came to the valley from England through Massachusetts to Woodson on the Columbia River. Her grandmother was from Ireland. The trip to the Nehalem area was a difficult one as they had to bring everything over the mountains to the valley. Once there, they and the eight children cleared the land by falling the trees and burning them, as there was no market for the timber. Their first crop was hops. Later, with the decline of the hop market, the eldest son William took the farm over and produced dairy and garden products, which were sold to the lumber camps. Her father, Andrew Johnston, worked in the woods with his horses. Some of his horses were sent away to the army during WWI. Myrtle's mother, who had been a teacher, also raised flowers and four children on a small farm at Birkenfeld until the death of her husband, when she left the valley.

Some of Myrtle's earliest memories are of the plank roads, donkey engines pulling themselves around the valley, barn raising, and other community affairs and the early settlements. Among these settlements were Deep Creek, Never Still, and Vesper, where the Johnston family was instrumental in building the Episcopal Church. The Vesper area was named by her grandfather, who was a strong church member.



A traveling minister, who served there, came on the fifth Sunday of the month and stayed with local church families overnight.

The valley was relatively untouched by the Depression and World War II. Wages were very low at times and there were shortages of some staples, such as sugar and gasoline, but since most people were farmers there was little disruption. Sewing clothes and processing food were skills that were only enhanced during the hard times. Myrtle attended the local grade school where teachers sometimes had problems adjusting to country life. The teaching methods of those days were very basic and concerns sometimes included keeping the wood heater going and making sure the students took proper care of their horses. She completed high school in Tigard after the death of her father.

Education after high school included Oregon State College and the state Normal school. After three years of teaching in Mosier in Eastern Oregon, she returned to the valley and taught at Spruce Run Shed logging camp for three years. Later, she taught and was principal at Birkenfield. With the arrival of her children, she quit teaching but substituted around the area. When her husband was injured in an acci-

dent, she returned to teaching full time at Jewell and continued until retirement. While there, she founded the Jewell Kindergarten and taught it for nine years at her house.

Few of the families of the valley have members who have not had Myrtle as a teacher, either in the schools or as the leader of a 4-H club. Among the clubs she has established and led are home skills, forestry, outdoor cooking, and several different arts and crafts. Her three children had many projects.

Myrtle continues to be a leader in her community, working with 4-H, local history, and a social club that makes new residents, many of whom have moved into a local retirement community, feel welcome.

The Slinger farm in Jewell has been owned by the family for 43 years and is still active. Myrtle still gardens, raises flowers and tends a beef herd. Family members have been a real help in recent years, especially the grandchildren who often stay at the farm for periods of time.

Charles Thompson

*Ocean fisherman, Oregon coastal resident,
entrepreneur, marine surveyor*

Charles Thompson has been able to adapt to the tremendous changes that have occurred on the Pacific Coast and in commercial fishing over the last 50 years, and remains an optimist. He is convinced there is a good future in fishing provided a young person prepares carefully and can find the financial backing. He believes there is less room for mistakes than in past times.

Charles' ancestors came from a number of nationalities, as many Americans do, but he remembers his Danish grandmother's rye bread and clam chowder. His father was a businessman with a variety of skills, especially mechanical. The Thompson family lived for a time in Waldport and then Albany, where his father worked as a truck mechanic. When Charles was in the fifth grade, they moved to Bandon, where his father built the cold storage and fish plant after the fire of 1936. He later owned a 52 foot troller-crabber though he did not fish it himself. The family survived the poor economic times by living off the land. It sometimes included trading fish for other necessities.

Fishing became an important part of Charles' life when he landed his first silver salmon at age five. Later, he caught mud cats from a scow run by a washing machine motor built by his brother. He sold the fish to his father, who ran a business selling ground-up fish as a feed.

After graduating from high school and the Maritime school in Catalina, Charles worked as a civilian with the military in the North Pacific on troop transports and tugboats. At that time, he visited Kodiak, the Aleutian Islands, and had many adventures in other parts of Alaska.

When they married, Charles and his wife Doris agreed that he would fish for a living. After his discharge, they moved to Newport, and he got a job on a shark gillnetter. With the loss of the market for shark liver, he went into business with his brother Hobart. They purchased, dismantled, and rebuilt surplus military craft. Some of those barges were sunk to make the docks at Newport.

A Canadian boat that blew up in Newport was repaired by Hobart, and Charles bought it and began crabbing and trolling. Besides the information gained from a life on the coast, he had to learn by trial and



error, even though there was always help from other fishermen. His first year trolling was a good one, and it provided for leaner years later. Experience has proven a fishing philosophy that one good year prepares for two mediocre and two poor. Those who have not so prepared themselves have often not lasted as fishermen. A strong family life with a wife who is a true partner has also strengthened the Thompson family. His son, Terry, began fishing with him when he was ten and continues today.

During Terry's college years, the Thompsons moved to Salem, and Charles sold construction equipment. However, most weekends were spent at the coast, and when the opportunity arose, he and some partners bought a large southern-built boat and they fished crab in Alaska. When Alaskan isolation and the separation from his family bothered him, he sold out and returned to Newport. There he built his own boat for tuna, crabbing, and trawling. With financial help from Bumblebee Seafoods, he modified it for shrimping, which was very profitable at that time. With two partners, the group eventually owned four boats and Charles began bringing shrimpers from the Gulf of Mexico to the West Coast. He has traveled through the Panama Canal seven times.

An ocean condition called El Nino devastated fishing in the early 1980's and the Thompsons lost their business and had to start over. With the help of Hobart and good fishing years thereafter, they have recovered, and with retirement from fishing, Charles has began a business as a marine surveyor. He has also been instrumental in the development of the Deep Sea Fishermen Benefit Fund, a beneficial organization for fishermen and their families.

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